



Nothing Is Wrong with Baila

Ages 9-12



Chapter 1: The Easy One

"And Baila?" Aunt Chana asks.

Mama smiles. "Baila is easy. She gets on with things."

Baila stands outside the kitchen with a drawing in her hand.

It isn't a drawing that needs fixing. It isn't homework. It isn't a form that needs signing.

It is a funny drawing of a family of umbrellas who forget their coats.

She wants Mama to look at it.

Inside, Aunt Chana asks another question. Mama answers. Both women have their hair fully covered: Mama in a green tichel, Aunt Chana in a dark sheitel.

Baila puts the drawing into her folder.

Easy girls probably don't interrupt.

Chapter 2: The Things That Count

At supper, her younger brother explains a difficult arithmetic page.

Her older sister explains a misunderstanding at school.

Tatty listens to one. Mama listens to the other. They will help after supper.

Baila has a perfectly ordinary day. Her arithmetic was correct. Her friends were kind. The umbrella drawing made her laugh while she worked on it.



"And your day?" Mama asks her.

"Fine."

There is no reason for Mama to get up from her chair and come see something fine.

Baila eats her soup.

Later, she hears Mama laughing with her older sister after the misunderstanding is explained.

It isn't only hard things that get talked about. Sometimes the hard thing seems to be the door into all the other things.

Baila doesn't know where her door is.

Chapter 3: A Nearly Wrong Answer

On Tuesday, she is tempted to leave a homework answer blank.

Mama might sit with her then. She might notice the umbrellas in the folder. They might talk while they find the answer.

Baila looks at the question.

She knows the answer.

She writes it.

Making her own page harder seems a strange way to ask someone to look at it. It also leaves Mama solving a problem that isn't really there.



Baila brings the folder downstairs.

Mama is sorting socks. Baila sits beside her.

"Is anything troubling you?" Mama asks.

Baila starts to say no.

Then she realizes something is troubling her, although it isn't arithmetic or a classmate.

"I don't know how to get a turn when nothing is wrong."

Chapter 4: Not an Emergency

Mama puts the socks down.

Baila explains the kitchen conversation, supper, and the drawing.

"You asked about my day. I said fine. So you did ask."

"I did," Mama says. "I didn't know fine meant you still had something you wanted to share."

"I thought you'd be too busy."

"Sometimes I am busy at the moment you ask. That doesn't mean only problems deserve time."

Baila traces the corner of her folder.

"When you say I'm easy, I think I should stay that way."

Mama looks at her for a moment.



"I meant you manage many things well. I don't want you to hear that you must need nothing. I'll choose my words more carefully."

Baila isn't looking for Mama to confess to never listening. Mama listens many times.

She wants the next time to have room for an umbrella that does not urgently need saving.

Chapter 5: Ten Minutes

Mama needs to finish the socks before starting supper.

She and Baila choose ten minutes together afterward, before the kitchen gets busy. Baila can show the drawing then.

Baila nearly says it doesn't matter anymore.

It does matter. She wants now, but ten minutes later is still a real offer.

She stays to pair two small socks, then takes her folder to the table.

When Mama finishes, she comes over without Baila needing to begin a crisis.

Baila opens the picture.

The father umbrella carries a tiny raincoat over one spoke. The baby umbrella wears four boots with no feet inside them.

Mama laughs at the boots.

"Where are they going?"



"Out in the sunshine. They're very worried about sunburn."

They talk about the picture until Mama needs to start supper.

The conversation has an end. It still counts.

Chapter 6: A Busy Answer

On Thursday, Baila wants to tell Tatty about a funny classroom sentence.

He is getting ready to leave.

"Could you listen to something?"

"I can't properly now. Would after supper work?"

Baila feels the old disappointment. Nothing is wrong, so she could simply put the sentence away.

Instead, she says after supper works.

She writes two reminder words on a scrap: giant teaspoon.

At supper, her brother has another arithmetic question. Tatty tells him they will look at it after Baila's story.

Baila doesn't win a contest against arithmetic. They have two turns to arrange.

Her giant teaspoon takes four minutes. Tatty laughs. Then her brother brings the workbook.



Chapter 7: The Next Question

At the next family visit, Aunt Chana asks how the children are doing.

Mama says Baila drew something very funny this week.

"Umbrellas," Baila supplies.

Aunt Chana asks to see it another time. Baila says she can bring the folder on their next visit.

She doesn't have to share every drawing because somebody is interested. Today, she wants to share this one.

At home, a difficult feeling may still need telling. A good day may have details worth telling too.

Neither answer makes her a less pleasant daughter.

She begins a new page with a watering can that fears getting wet.

When she wants a listener, she will ask for one. She doesn't need to leave the watering can in danger first.